

I observed is that they were much further along in their curriculum. The students were much more advanced." end quote.

Mr. President, I have been so impressed with the success of the SAGE program that I introduced the National SAGE Act, legislation to offer grants to qualifying states to assist them in reducing public school class size in the earliest grades. The National SAGE Act authorizes \$75 million over five years to fund a limited number of demonstration grants to states that create innovative programs to reduce public school class size and improve educational performance, as Wisconsin has done. The Secretary of Education would choose the states to receive funding based on several factors, including a state's need to reduce class size, the ability of a state education agency to fund half the program, and the degree to which parents, teachers, administrators, and teacher organizations are consulted in designing the program.

The National SAGE Act is fully offset by cuts in a wasteful and unnecessary federal subsidy that benefits research and development for the world's largest aircraft manufacturer. We can fund this important SAGE program, while simultaneously reducing the federal budget deficit by more than \$2.1 billion over five years.

My legislation also includes a comprehensive research and evaluation component that would document the benefits of smaller class size in the earliest grades, and support efforts to reduce class size in schools all over the country.

I think we all can agree that there are no easy solutions to the problems in our public schools. I believe, however, that targeting federal funds, matched on a 50-50 basis with state funding, to assist school districts moving toward smaller class size, is an effective use of federal dollars. The federal government, in cooperation with local school boards and state governments, has a responsibility to take positive steps toward helping school districts reduce class size as a part of an overall effort to improve student learning. As we near the end of the 105th Congress, I hope my Senate colleagues will embrace SAGE as a serious and exciting reform effort and act to assist states trying to reduce public school class size.

Again, congratulations to the twenty new Wisconsin SAGE schools—you are off to a great start for a successful school year.●

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

● MR. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, September 2, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,566,129,223,474.84 (Five trillion, five hundred sixty-six billion, one hundred twenty-nine million, two hundred twenty-three thousand, four hundred seventy-four dollars and eighty-four cents).

One year ago, September 2, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,424,369,000,000

(Five trillion, four hundred twenty-four billion, three hundred sixty-nine million).

Five years ago, September 2, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,399,264,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred ninety-nine billion, two hundred sixty-four million).

Ten years ago, September 2, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,605,115,000,000 (Two trillion, six hundred five billion, one hundred fifteen million).

Fifteen years ago, September 2, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,358,215,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred fifty-eight billion, two hundred fifteen million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,207,914,223,474.84 (Four trillion, two hundred seven billion, nine hundred fourteen million, two hundred twenty-three thousand, four hundred seventy-four dollars and eighty-four cents) during the past 15 years.●

NASHVILLE PILOTS COMPLETE HISTORIC JOURNEY

● MR. THOMPSON. Mr. President, I want to share with the Senate a courageous story about two female Tennesseans who recently succeeded in their quest to retrace a historic flight around the world.

Nikki Mitchell and Rhonda Miles landed their single-engine Maule M-5 plane at the Lebanon, Tennessee airport on Saturday, August 22, 1998. Their trip, dubbed the "Bridge of Wings Tour," was completed 49 days after they took off from the same airport.

Their flight commemorates the historical achievement of three female Russian pilots. That journey, known as the "Flight of the Rodina," was a story of courage and stamina in the tradition of Lindbergh and Earhart. It took place in 1938, when the three Russians flew non-stop from Moscow to the southeastern tip of Siberia.

The Russian pilots flew with virtually no radio transmission, through skies so overcast no landmarks were visible, yet they broke a world record and opened up the route across Siberia. They were cheered worldwide and received their country's highest award, the Gold Star of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Sixty years later, Nikki and Rhonda celebrated the accomplishments of the Rodina on the anniversary of its flight. A portion of their 15,000 mile trip included retracing the steps of the three Soviet women from Moscow to the southeastern tip of Siberia. And for this leg of the route they were joined by two Russian women who flew their plane side by side with the American aircraft in a unified flight of honor and goodwill.

As they flew over Russian territory, Nikki and Rhonda were met by crowds and cheers in villages across the Russian Far East. The level of excitement was such that a commercial airline canceled a flight so its fuel could be used for the continuation of their flight.

Before returning to Tennessee, Nikki and Rhonda were also warmly wel-

comed in Alaska, Canada, and Des Moines, Iowa. It goes without saying that upon arrival in Lebanon, Tennessee, they were given a welcome fit for heroes.

Nikki and Rhonda, dressed in blue flight suits and holding flowers, couldn't contain their excitement as they stepped out of the plane. Nikki showed how happy she was to be back in the Volunteer State by immediately kissing the Tennessee soil. Also thankful to be home, Rhonda could not stop smiling as friends rushed to greet her.

Mr. President, I know my colleagues in the Senate join me in saluting Nikki and Rhonda for their courageous journey. These Tennesseans have recreated one of history's most daring and remarkable flights. Their trip will always be remembered as an international effort to honor one of aviation's most exciting moments. I have no doubt that the example set by these women will inspire others to strive toward achieving their own ambitions and goals.●

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

● MR. KYL. Mr. President, yesterday, I led an effort during consideration of the FY99 foreign operations appropriations bill to tighten the conditions under which additional funding is made available to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Although the bill included provisions to prod the IMF into making badly needed reforms of its operations, it stopped short of actually requiring the implementation of those reforms. Instead, it merely conditioned the release of funds on the IMF making a public commitment to reform. That, in my view, was not good enough.

The IMF has not effectively used the funds that have been allocated to it in the past. According to Johns Hopkins University economist, Steve Hanke, few nations have actually graduated from IMF emergency loans. Most have stayed on the dole for years on end. One study found that, of the 137 mostly developing countries from 1965 to 1995, less than a third graduated from IMF loan programs.

The Heritage Foundation has found that, of the IMF's borrowers during 1965 to 1995, no more than half were better off than when they started the loan programs. Almost all were actually poorer, and almost all were deeper in debt.

The IMF's failures are apparent even today. Just a few months ago, the IMF orchestrated a \$22.6 billion bailout package for Russia, yet that country's economy shows no signs of improving. In fact, it is growing worse every day. And all of the experts agree that, unless Russia establishes the kind of rules of law required for a functioning economy, all the money in the world will not help it. We would be fooling ourselves to think otherwise.